



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**August 13, 2025**

### **Then & Now: Where O'ahu's Past and Present Shape a New Sense of Place**

*Iconic sites, storied stays, and hidden gems invite travelers to explore a new era of timeless Hawai'i*

**O'AHU** — History on O'ahu isn't just preserved; it's performed, reinterpreted, and lived every day. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II events that took place on USS Missouri, the famed "Mighty Mo," now permanently docked at Pearl Harbor as a powerful symbol of peace and remembrance. O'ahu invites travelers to rediscover the island as a living museum — not encased in glass, but pulsing with stories, design, and timeless experiences. From the iconic Moana Surfrider's upcoming 125th anniversary to Waikiki's retro-inspired resorts, hidden speakeasies, and landmark cultural institutions, O'ahu is redefining its "Golden Era" — a renaissance rooted in authenticity, elegance, and connection.

"O'ahu's story is best experienced through its people, places, and traditions that continue to thrive across the island," said Noelani Schilling-Wheeler, executive director of the O'ahu Visitors Bureau. "Whether stepping into a historic hotel, surfing Waikiki's historic waters, or discovering a hidden restaurant or bar with a backstory, every moment here connects past and present."

This renaissance invites both returning visitors to rediscover nostalgic experiences and new travelers to explore Hawai'i through a fresh lens of style and story. Below is a curated list of experiences to enjoy, whether it's your first time visiting or you're a frequent traveler eager to rediscover O'ahu.

### **VINTAGE VACATION VIBES**

Stay where the story began. At the heart of Waikiki's revival is the [Moana Surfrider, A Westin Resort & Spa](#), the first hotel in Waikiki and lovingly known as the "First Lady of Waikiki." The oceanfront icon will celebrate its 125th anniversary in March 2026, coinciding with the completion of a major renovation that preserves its Victorian elegance while introducing a refreshed sense of quiet luxury. Just next door, [The Royal Hawaiian, a Luxury Collection Resort](#) — the "Pink Palace of the Pacific" — continues to charm with its Moorish architecture and Old Hollywood legacy. Built in 1927 on royal land, the resort has hosted stars from Shirley Temple to modern-day icons. Waikiki's retro revival also lives on through a new wave of design-forward stays. [The Surfjack Hotel & Swim Club](#) channels 1960s surf culture with mid-century flair, while [The Laylow](#) offers a stylish mid-century modern retreat featuring lanai-style dining at Hideout, vintage touches, and a soundtrack of custom 'ukulele melodies that evoke a nostalgic island vibe. At [Romer House Waikiki](#) — the island's only adults-only hotel — tropical disco meets local storytelling at The Lei Stand cocktail bar, offering a bold, boutique twist.

### **REDISCOVER O'AHU**

Step into O'ahu's golden era of entertainment with memorable experiences. [In the Southern Sun](#) is an immersive art experience unlike any other best described as: part exhibition, part memory, part living canvas. Presented by global art collective POW! WOW! and curated by Kamea Hadar, this year-long journey through light, land, and layered history takes place in a reimagined gallery on Kalākaua Avenue, located at Hyatt Regency Waikiki Beach Resort and Spa. Adding to the renaissance is ['Auana](#), the first-ever Cirque du Soleil residency in

Hawai‘i. Presented in Waikīkī, the production blends eight chapters of Hawaiian storytelling with Cirque’s signature acrobatics, sound design, and visual artistry — creating a theatrical experience rooted firmly in place. Visitors should not miss the many complimentary *hula* (dance) performances found throughout Waikīkī, where dancers share stories of Hawai‘i through *mele* (music), movement, and tradition, from resort shows like [Nā Lei Aloha](#) to performances along the beach or at shopping centers. Beyond Waikīkī, travelers can continue their cultural journey at [‘Iolani Palace](#), the only official royal palace in the U.S.; the [Bishop Museum](#), home to over 25 million artifacts from across the Pacific; the [Shangri La Museum](#), showcasing Islamic and global art in a stunning oceanside estate; and the [Pearl Harbor Historic Sites](#), including the USS Missouri, USS Arizona Memorial, and Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum. On September 2, 2025, the [Battleship Missouri Memorial](#) will unveil a brand-new interactive exhibit experience, *Pathway to Peace*, commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. Through personal artifacts, intimate belongings, and archival film footage, the exhibit offers a powerful look at the lives of the sailors aboard the "Mighty Mo" and the pivotal events that shaped global history. Visitors can also explore [Kualoa Ranch](#), a 4,000-acre nature reserve and working cattle ranch that’s doubled as Hollywood’s “Hawai‘i backlot” for decades. With its deep cultural roots and cinematic legacy, the ranch offers everything from immersive cultural tours and farm-to-table tastings to horseback riding through Native Hawaiian fishponds and sacred valleys. Rounding out the island’s cultural renaissance is a night at the iconic [Hawai‘i Theatre](#) in Downtown Honolulu. Known as the “Pride of the Pacific,” this restored 1922 gem hosts concerts, film screenings, and live performances that blend local talent with global artistry.

## TREASURES REFLECTING THE PAST

O‘ahu continues its historic and creative resurgence, blending old soul with fresh perspective. Boutique shops like [Harbor’s Vintage](#), [Hound & Quail](#), and [Single Double](#) offer thoughtfully curated treasures that reflect Hawai‘i’s rich fashion and design heritage. Around every corner, self-guided historic walking tours reveal the layered character of the island— where historic buildings have been reimagined as speakeasies, creative studios, factories and hidden galleries, inviting visitors to explore the past through the lens of the present. Across the island, markets and boutiques celebrate O‘ahu’s creative renaissance. In neighborhoods like Kaimukī and Kailua, shoppers will find local makers, vintage surf culture, and handcrafted goods that blend sustainability and style. At [Nā Mea Hawai‘i](#) and [da Shop](#), books, music, and locally made art invite a deeper understanding of the stories that shape Hawai‘i. No visit is complete without the timeless gesture of a *lei*. Travelers are encouraged to support local *lei* stands, many of which have been family-run for generations in the Chinatown Historic District, Honolulu.

## TASTE OF YESTERDAY

O‘ahu’s sense of nostalgia extends into its nightlife, where speakeasies, vinyl lounges, and hidden rooms offer a transportive blend of ambiance, artistry, and a touch of rebellion. Tucked beneath the AC Hotel in Downtown Honolulu, [Yours Truly](#) transforms a former post office into a prohibition-style cocktail bar that nods to a 19th-century curio shop once infamous for printing “exotic Hawai‘i” postcards, delivering an immersive, step-by-step experience rich in history and mood. Just around the corner, [EP Bar](#) channels the spirit of Japanese vinyl lounges with nearly 3,000 records and a menu of inventive highballs in an intimate, audio-forward setting. Other hidden gems — [Green Lady Cocktail Room](#), [Wild Orange](#), [430 Parkway](#), [Vintage Books](#), and [Gaslamp](#) — invite guests through secret doors into moody, cinematic spaces where design, storytelling, and mixology collide. For more classic experiences, [Lewers Lounge](#) at Halekulani offers nightly live jazz and refined cocktails in a timeless setting, [Blue Note Hawai‘i](#) hosts top jazz and island performers, and [Henry Kapon’s Duke’s on Sunday](#) delivers a beloved beachfront concert tradition that has

welcomed crowds and good vibes since 1993. That throwback flavor extends to the island's evolving comfort food scene. [The Daley Burger](#), [W&M Bar-B-Q](#) and [Boarded Up by Chubbies Burgers](#) are go-to spots for a no-frills, old-school Smashburger fix. And for a true taste of local memory lane, [ThrowBack Alley \(TBA\)](#) at the Sheraton Princess Kaiulani Hotel brings together beloved dishes of old Hawai'i in a rotating pop-up format that feels like your favorite mom-and-pop diners came back to life. To learn more and explore travel inspiration, visit [GoHawaii.com/Oahu](http://GoHawaii.com/Oahu).

###

Contact:

Anna Piergallini

Anthology, FINN Partners

Email: [anna.piergallini@finnpartners.com](mailto:anna.piergallini@finnpartners.com)

Website: <http://media.gohawaii.com/oahu/>